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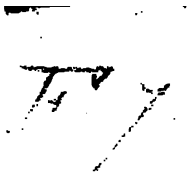
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MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS.



THOMAS
FRANCKLIN.
D. D.

Painted by H. & F. 1788.

On Stone by C. Hayles.

London, William Pickersay 1847.

See the original in the collection.

MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS,

AN HISTORICAL PLAY,

BY THE LATE

REV. THOMAS FRANCKLIN, D.D.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS LATE MAJESTY, GEORGE THE THIRD;
RECTOR OF BRASTED, KENT; AND PROFESSOR OF GREEK
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

LIEUT.-COL. WILLIAM FRANCKLIN,

M.R.A.S., M.Cal.A.S.

LATE OF THE HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S SERVICE,
AND AUTHOR OF 'A TOUR TO PERSIA,'—'HISTORY OF THE EMPEROR SHAH
ALUM,'—'MEMOIRS OF GENERAL THOMAS,'—'REMARKS ON THE
PLAIN OF TROY,'—'CAMARUPA, A TRANSLATION FROM THE PERSIAN,'—
'ESSAYS ON THE SITE OF ANCIENT PALIBOTHTA,'—'INDIAN
TRACTS,'—'MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS,' &c. &c.

"—— Subiit cari genitoris imago."—VIRG. ÆNEIS.

LONDON:

WILLIAM PICKERING.

1837. *h*



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6 May 1837

TO MAJOR GENERAL

SIR HENRY WORSLEY,

K. C. B., M. R. A. S. & C.

LATE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE BENGAL ARMY,

THE KIND COMPANION, FRIEND,

AND COUNSELLOR, THROUGH A LONG AND EVENTFUL

LIFE, THIS PLAY IS DEDICATED, BY HIS

AFFECTIONATE COMRADE,

THE EDITOR.

London, 1837.

P R E F A C E.

IN offering the following Play to the notice of the public, the Editor has only in view to do honour to the memory of a respected parent; an author not wholly unknown, as the translator of *Sophocles*, *Lucian*, and *Phalaris*, and who, to his other acquirements, added those of a sound and truly orthodox divine, in the publication of his beautiful and instructive "RELATIVE DUTIES," and his Discourses on various subjects of Holy Writ.

His eldest son trusts that his own humble exertions, in endeavouring to follow his father's footsteps in the paths of literature, though confessedly "*Haud passibus æquis*," during a long residence in the service of his country in the East, in the hours of relaxation from his professional duties, may, on the present occasion, his

eleventh hour, give him some claim to experiencing the approbation of an enlightened public.

The Editor begs to offer his best thanks to his friend, Captain T. Seymour Burt., F. R. S., M. R. A. S., &c., of the Bengal Engineers, for his kindness in passing this work through the press, and for his exertions in forwarding its publication.

London, April, 1837.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

CECIL, LORD BURLFIGH.
NORFOLK.
LEICESTER.
SOUTHAMPTON.
WALSINGHAM.
HATTON.
GIFFORD, A PRIEST.
DAVISON.

WOMEN.

ELIZABETH.
MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS.
EMILY, ATTENDANT ON MARY.
WOMEN.

MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

CECIL, DAVISON.

CECIL.

No more, my friend ; it looks like flattery,
Which I abhor : in raising thee I have done
But what I ought ; thou hast deserved it all :
The queen has judgment to discern thy merit,
And power thou know'st most amply to
Reward it.

DAVISON.

Yet I have heard, you'll pardon me, my lord,
She is not over lavish of her bounties, but
Deals her favours with a scanty hand.

CECIL.

O blame her not for that, good Davison ;
A thrifty sov'reign makes a wealthy people :
She will not scatter all the nation's strength
In idle splendour, but with prudence keep
The public treasure for the public need.

DAVISON.

Frugality indeed is now become
A necessary virtue, which we all
Should learn to practise.

CECIL.

Yet I blush to think
How many idle great ones, in this hour
Of common peril, wanton in the arms
Of heart enfeebling luxury, and waste,
In the gay round of fashionable follies,
The wealth that should support their falling country.
Elizabeth is prudent, wise, and good ;
In penetration, deep sagacity,
And persevering fortitude, she soars
Above her sex.

DAVISON.

And yet there are who say,
She is no stranger to her sex's weakness,
And condescends sometimes to be a woman.

CECIL.

There is a female frailty in her nature,

That sometimes takes the rein; but, thanks to heaven,
She has affections of a nobler kind,
To damp its fire; her prudence and her pride
Have saved her oft; and when deluding love,
With wily softness, steals into her heart,
She calls the ruling passion to her aid,
And bids ambition check the bold intruder.

DAVISON.

Her conduct there, my lord, is much indebted,
Or I mistake, to Cecil's kind advice;
His honest zeal with caution watches o'er
Her every action.

CECIL.

'Tis the statesman's duty
To mark his sov'reign's passions as they bend
Their rapid course, and guide the wand'ring stream
Of his affection towards his country's welfare;
To make his virtues useful, and direct
His faults, and failings to the public good:
Such, Davison, hath been thy friend's ambition,
And be it thine; already thou hast gain'd
The queen's regard; be careful to preserve it.

DAVISON.

That is a lesson I must learn from you,
Who by persuasive gentle arts can soothe
The tranquil mind as with a silken cord,
May lead her on and mould her to his purpose:
But if with open violence you thwart
Her will, then all the blust'ring Harry's rage

Glows in her cheek and sparkles in her eye.
In truth, my lord, you have an arduous task ;
For if report say true, Elizabeth
Is wayward, proud, dissembling, and inconstant.

CECIL.

She has her faults, my friend, and follies too,
But I have veil'd them from the public eye,
And so bewitch'd opinion in her favour,
That, dazzled with the glories of her reign,
Eager to praise, posterity shall lift
Th' admiring eye and wonder at her virtues.

DAVISON.

How much we owe to thy paternal care,
Thou art the great, the actuating spring
That moves the whole machine; on Cecil's wisdom,
And Cecil's counsels, hangs the fate of England.

CECIL.

Oppressive burthen : never envy him
Who holds the reins in this uncertain state ;
It is a sea for ever vex'd with storms :
If, by long labours and successful service,
We steer the ship entrusted to our care,
The master seizes on the golden freight,
And we are soon forgot : but if, perchance,
The hapless vessel split on rocks unseen,
When danger threatens the crew tumultuous rise,
And dash the guiltless pilot from his helm
To sink unpity'd,—such may be my fate.

DAVISON.

Forbid it heaven, forbid it gratitude
And great Elizabeth: for sure, my lord,
With all her faults, she holds her people dear.

CECIL.

As life and being: 'tis her noblest pride,
Her pleasure, her delight, to make them happy;
There is a sweet enthusiasm in her love
For England, that with *me* atones for all
Her venial errors: when she talks of it
'Tis with such warmth, such energy of speech,
As if a lover's rapture fired her soul.

DAVISON.

What must she feel then for its present state,
When Mary's subtle and delusive wiles
Have well nigh shaken this devoted realm
To its foundation?

CECIL.

That pernicious woman
With baleful influence blasts my every purpose:
I tremble at her power, for whilst *she* lives
Elizabeth can never reign in peace.

DAVISON.

She is most beauteous still, and still, I hear,
Can boast her fond admirers; how succeeds
The gallant Norfolk in his am'rous suit
To that fair captive?

CECIL.

Much I fear too well :

Their union would be fatal to the queen,
To England fatal ; but if I have art
Or power to prevent, it shall not be.

DAVISON.

The duke is warm, precipitate, and bold,
For ever in extremes, whate'er he hates
He hates with bitterest rancour, what he loves
He loves to madness !

CECIL.

There are those, my friend,
Who weave themselves the net that must ensnare them,
Rush headlong on and seem to court destruction :
Such Norfolk is : I know his foolish passion
Ere long will urge him to some desp'rate purpose,
That must involve them both in certain ruin.

DAVISON.

I've seen him oft of late in conference deep
With those I like not.

CECIL.

There is cause, my friend,
For strong suspicion. I already know
Much more than I could wish ; and so I mean
To tell him ; to be open and sincere,
Give him my honest counsel as a friend,
Alarm his fears, and warn him of his danger ;

If after *that* he swerve from loyalty,
And league with England's foes, the peril then
Be on his head; Cecil shall stand acquitted.
But see he comes.
I know his errand; Davison, retire,
Summon the council: we have business there
Of highest import; let 'em be prepared,
The queen will meet them—watch Ridolphi close.

DAVISON.

I will, my lord.

CECIL.

Farewell. [*Exit Davison.*]

SCENE II.

NORFOLK AND CECIL.

NORFOLK.

Good morrow, noble Cecil;
Health and success attend you! May I ask
When last you saw the queen?

CECIL.

This very morn,
My lord, I had some private conference with her,
Touching affairs of moment to the state.

NORFOLK.

Did you prefer my humble suit, and plead
For injur'd innocence? The captive queen—

CECIL.

My lord, I wish to serve you, but the times
Are full of danger, and at such a crisis
I dare not urge it to her.

NORFOLK.

Dare not! What!

The mighty Cecil, whose directing hand
Presides o'er all unrivall'd; shall he deign
To crouch beneath offended majesty,
And tremble at its frown? By heaven, I think,
Whate'er a faithful subject hath to offer
That tends to public good, howe'er in thought
He err, 'tis fit a sovereign should hear.

CECIL.

But may there not be something, good my lord,
'Twould ill befit a subject to request,
Or sovereign to bestow? I could not ask it.

NORFOLK.

Not ask it? Cecil is not Norfolk's friend.

CECIL.

I am a friend to all who love their queen
And wish their country's welfare; foe to none
But those of England and Elizabeth.

NORFOLK.

Cecil, you wrong me with unjust suspicions,
For know I love and honour both. There lives not
A warmer patriot.

CECIL.

Good my lord, repeat not
That awful, sacred, prostituted name.
There *was* a time when such a character
Was not unknown amongst us; but 'tis past:
'Tis now no more than the poor flimsy veil
Of sordid avarice, or of mean self-love;
A mere convenient, threadbare habit, worn
By every idle brawler in the senate,
Who talks of public good, and means his own.

NORFOLK.

I thank you, Cecil, for the kind suggestion,
And only wish the brawlers *you* despise,
With all their zeal could make a statesman just,
Or teach a callous minister to feel.
For me, I own I have a foolish weakness,
A fond, believing, sympathetic heart
That melts with pity at another's woe.

CECIL.

In truth, my lord, you have been wondrous kind
To the distress'd. No doubt the grateful fair one
Will make you ample retribution.

NORFOLK.

Wherefore
Doth gracious heaven impart its bounties to us,
Or give us power, but to relieve the wretched?

CECIL.

Ay, but when guilt inherits the reward
Of innocence, the giver but partakes
The crime which he supports : nay, more, my lord ;
Know, to assist a traitor is—rebellion.

NORFOLK.

If 'tis rebellion to protect the weak,
To shelter weeping beauty from the storm
Of proud oppression, and redeem the captive
From chains and death, I am indeed a rebel.
And if to sigh, to strive for years in vain
(Who would not strive ?) for precious liberty,
If this be treason, Mary is a traitor.
There is a crime indeed, as well thou know'st,
A crime which woman never can forgive :
Superior beauty. There *my* Scottish queen
Is against *yours* most eminently guilty.

CECIL.

Long hath her peerless beauty stood confess'd ;
So long indeed, that there are those, my lord,
As I have heard of late, who wonder much
She should have met in her declining years
With such a suitor as the gallant Norfolk
To crown her conquests.

NORFOLK.

Mary's setting sun,
Low as it is, shines forth with brighter rays
Than proud Elizabeth could ever boast
In her meridian lustre.

CECIL.

Proud, my lord ?
If *she* has pride, 'tis of a nobler nature
Than that which triumphs in th' exulting eye
Of transient beauty : 'tis the pride of reason,
Of honour, wisdom, learning, martial spirit,
With all the fair perfections of the soul
That make a people happy. Would to heaven
Each murmur'ing subject who defames his prince
Would imitate the virtues he condemns,
Would place the fair original before him,
And strive to copy well the bright example.

NORFOLK.

I grant her all you wish, but there is still
One virtue which she wants—Humanity :
She would not else have kept a noble princess
In shameful bondage, and so oft deceived her
With hopes of promised freedom. O 'twas mean,
Unworthy of a monarch to dissemble.

CECIL.

Norfolk, restrain your bold licentious tongue,
Nor urge me further : you forget, my lord,
That I am bound by every sacred tie,
By honour, duty, gratitude, and love,
To hide no secret from my sov'reign's ear.

NORFOLK.

Nor would I wish it ; no, I would proclaim
My honest passion to a list'ning *world*.
When next your council meet, I shall avow it,
Tho' venal courtiers should oppose my suit ;
I stand resolv'd to shield an injured queen
From her oppressors, or to share her fate.

CECIL.

So hot, so confident ! then fare you well,
For we can never meet on terms like these :
Yet ere we part, remember, Cecil gives
This kind advice to Norfolk as his friend ;
Subdue this idle passion, think no more
Of Scotland's queen, nor hold rash converse with her.
Beware of evil counsellors, retreat
In time : be wise, be cautious, and be happy.
[*Exit Cecil.*]

SCENE III.

NORFOLK ALONE.

NORFOLK.

Be cautious ! caution is a coward's virtue,
And I despise it, the mean sordid habit
Of low and little minds : it ill becomes
The hero or the lover : when my soul
Was all on fire with beauteous Mary's charms,
Was that a time for this cold blooded statesman

To preach his dull morality ? I hate
The lifeless pedant !

Ha ! Ridolphi here ?

He comes in happy hour.

[*Enter Ridolphi.*]

SCENE IV.

RIDOLPHI AND NORFOLK.

NORFOLK.

Well, my friend,
What news ? you gave my letters to the queen ?

RIDOLPHI.

I did, my lord.

NORFOLK.

But say, hath honest Thickford
Transmitted safe the treasure which I sent
To Mary's Scottish friends ?

RIDOLPHI.

Ere this I doubt not
Lord Herries hath received it ; but whence, my lord,
That down-cast eye, and melancholy aspect ?
You look as if yon haughty minister
Had just been chiding you.

NORFOLK.

And so in truth
He hath, and with such rude asperity

As Norfolk's spirit brooks not ; but the time
May come when I shall hope—

RIDOLPHI.

To be revenged.

NORFOLK.

Give me the means.

RIDOLPHI.

The means, my lord, are found.

Already England's discontented nobles
Are ripe for a revolt, and only want
A brave and valiant leader ; need I add
To *thee* they look, on thee an injured people
Calls for redress, conjures thee to protect
A beauteous queen, who offers thee a throne,
Her kingdom, and herself.

NORFOLK.

The *last*, Ridolphi,

The last is all I ask of bounteous heaven :
I would not wish for honour, riches, fame,
Or empire, but to share it with my love.

RIDOLPHI.

She shall be thine, and soon : the noble houses
Of Percy and of Nevil are our friends ;
Pembroke and Arundel : Northumberland,
With all the busy spirits of the north
Is rising for us : first we have resolved
By force of arms, to free the Scottish queen.

NORFOLK.

O, 'twill be glorious triumph. Yes, Ridolphi,
Methinks I see the gloomy Cecil knit
His angry brow, and threat the trembling slaves,
Who come to tell him, that his lovely prey,
She who so long had struggled in the toils,
Has broke the snare and fled to Norfolk's arms.
But say, my friend, when we have gain'd the prize,
What blest asylum shall we find to place her
In peace and safety?

RIDOLPHI.

Where shall beauty shine
In brighter lustre than on England's throne?
And who shall share it with her? who so fit
As her deliverer, the noble Norfolk?

NORFOLK.

Ha! Mary and a throne! 'twere happiness
Too great for man: ambition, tempt me not
With thy deceitful lure; it cannot be,
We must not hope.

RIDOLPHI.

We'll not despair, our cause
Will gather strength and numbers every hour;
Alva hath promised to support it; France
Will join us soon; and Philip's restless spirit
Would gladly set the crown on Mary's head.
Ross hath advised, that with a chosen band,
(Soon as the royal pris'ner is restored

To liberty) we hasten to the palace,
And seize Elizabeth.

NORFOLK.

Ha ! seize the queen,
Impossible ! th' attempt were rash and vain ;
But grant it done, what then ?

RIDOLPHI.

Why then, my lord,
We might dispose of her as best may suit
Our purpose.

NORFOLK.

Whither wouldst thou lead me ? blind
Ambition stop : I'll follow thee no further ;
I am not so far lost to every sense
Of honour, duty, and obedience. No :
We'll not disgrace the cause of liberty,
Or stain our noble enterprise with blood.
Forbid it, Heaven ! Ridolphi, we will talk
Of this hereafter ; fare thee well : to-morrow
After the council we will meet again.

RIDOLPHI.

Meantime remember, Mary's liberty
Depends on your resolves ; remember too,
In crimes of state, who shares but half the guilt
May meet with more than half its punishment.

[Exit Ridolphi.]

SCENE V.

NORFOLK ALONE.

'Tis well advised—these zealous sons of Rome
Will hazard all to propagate the faith
Which they espouse, and falsely think the end
Will justify the means, how base soe'er :
Pernicious maxim ! but I'm link'd so fast
With these new friends, that to advance with them,
Or to retreat, alike is full of danger ;
I'll to the council, and there urge my suit.
O for an angel's eloquence to plead
An angel's cause ! perhaps Elizabeth
May yet repent, may yet be merciful ;
May free the captive queen, and make us happy.
If not, Ridolphi, I am thine, whate'er
The consequence ; I cannot live without her :
The choice is fixed, a prison or a crown,
Mary or treason, liberty or death.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

ELIZABETH IN COUNCIL, CECIL, LEICESTER, &c.

LEICESTER.

WITH grief, my liege, this day we meet you here,
To lay our cares before you, and lament
Our country's fate ; for never, since the hour
That gave the best of sov'reigns to our wishes,
Hath England felt such sad variety
Of pressing ills, or stood so much in need
Of all the aid which wisdom can suggest,
Or zeal inspire. We know, alas ! too well,
What ills have flow'd from a disputed right
To England's throne, when York and Lancaster
Contended for the prize in fields of blood.
Permit us, therefore, good my liege, to urge
Our humble suit, and once more to request
That you would take a partner in your throne :
Some powerful friend that may support our cause,
Relieve your cares, and lessen your affliction.
Such is the wish of your assembled senate,
Such is the voice of your united people.

ELIZABETH.

My noble subjects, councillors, and friends,
What have I done to forfeit thus your love ?

Beshrew my heart, but it doth grieve me sore,
To think that, after we so long have trod
The paths of peace and happiness together,
Ye should at last be weary of your queen.
Sink I at length, my friends, beneath the weight
Of England's crown, that thus you cast it from me,
And kindly would relieve me of a burthen
I am no longer able to support ?
Why would ye rob me of my noblest power,
The glorious right to make my country happy ?
Heaven is my witness : I have struggled hard
For your religion, liberty, and laws ;
I wake, my subjects, but for your repose ;
Live but to serve, and rule but to obey you.

SOUTHAMPTON.

We know it well, and wish but to secure
The bliss which we enjoy to future times.
In your own royal race we would transmit
Your virtues, and to ages yet unborn
Extend the blessings of Eliza's reign.

ELIZABETH.

Urge me no more, my lords, I do beseech you,
On this ungrateful subject ; am I not
Already wedded ? England is my husband,
And you my children ; all alike shall share
A parent's riches, all divide her love.
Why was I raised to this exalted rank,
Why breathes Elizabeth but to promote
Her people's welfare and her kingdom's glory ?
That pleasing task I would myself perform,
Nor will I trust it to another's hand.

LEICESTER.

If it be so, my liege, we must submit
In humble silence to your grace's will.
But O, reflect on England's hapless state,
And tremble at our danger : mark the clouds
That gather round, and soon will burst upon us.
Not one of those whom we so oft relieved
Will stretch a hand to save : in vain we ask
Of Belgia's tardy sons the promised aid
Which or they will not, or they dare not lend :
The northern powers, unfeeling and unmoved,
Or smile in cruel mirth at our misfortunes,
Or freeze in cold indifference around us.

CECIL.

Add we to this, my lords, that Spain, grown proud
By Philip's conquests, and of rival France,
No longer jealous, every hour increases
Her naval strength, and binds her force against us :
We are encircled by combining foes
On every side, and left without a friend.

ELIZABETH.

Forbid it, Heaven ! there is a guardian power
Commission'd from above, that still hath made
This land of freedom his peculiar care ;
He will not leave us in the perilous hour
Of our distress, but send a gracious hand
To stop th' impending ruin, and preserve us.

CECIL.

"Tis nobly urged, and in that hope we rest ;

Yet unallied and unsupported, thus
To brave the storm, it is a dangerous conflict.

ELIZABETH.

And therefore worthy of us : Yes, my friends,
Against opposing millions England still
Shall guard her rights, and vindicate her throne.
The more she suffers, she but shines the more ;
She grows, she thrives beneath oppression's weight,
With double strength ; and, like her native oak
When winds assail, and tempests howl around,
Spreads her broad leaf, and rises from the blow.

CECIL.

Meantime it well befits us to prepare
Against the worst.

ELIZABETH.

I *am* prepared ; for know,
Nor awed by faction, nor by parties led,
Nor sooth'd by flatterers, I repose my safety
On the firm basis of my subjects' love ;
Our views, our hopes, our interests are the same.
Bless'd be the man, who, like my Cecil, knits
The sacred friendship in a golden chain ;
And cursed be he who strives to disunite them.
Shall we then tremble at a distant power
That threats us from afar ?

CECIL.

O, would to Heaven
Britain had nought but foreign foes to fear !

But there are hidden serpents in her bosom,
Domestic traitors, who unhinge the state ;
Of these are form'd the secret friends of Rome :
Hence the rank crowd of Mary's partisans.

NORFOLK.

My lord !—

CECIL.

Nay, start not ; from that poison'd spring
Rise all the noxious vapours that afflict
This wholesome land, rebellion, treasons, plots,
And foul conspiracies, that wound the peace
Of our loved sovereign's mind, and shake her throne.
Where is the man that will stand boldly forth,
And say it is not so ?

NORFOLK.

Behold him here :
Norfolk, the friend of injured majesty,
Beauty oppress'd, and innocence betray'd.

CECIL.

Perdition on her charms ! They have involved
One hapless nation in perpetual discord,
And half destroy'd another.

NORFOLK.

O, my lords,
If you have hearts to feel for the distress'd,
You must lament in sympathetic sorrow
Her hard, her cruel sufferings : but last night

I saw th' afflicted fair one. You like me
 Had pitied, if like me you had beheld
 The lovely mourner: on her homely couch
 Reclined, she sate in mean and coarse attire,
 (Ill suited to her rank,) whose sable hue
 Gave sweet relief to her contrasted beauties,
 And doubled all her charms; her lovely cheek
 Was wetted, like the dew-besprinkled rose,
 With many a tear, whilst sighs unnumber'd stole
 From her full heart, and spoke the grief within.
 Pensive she lean'd upon her snowy arm,
 That mock'd the Parian marble's rival whiteness,
 Then stretch'd her hand, and in a voice as sweet
 As ever brighten'd the fair face of joy,
 Or sooth'd the soul of anguish to repose,
 Told her sad tale.

ELIZABETH.

Which we have heard before,
 My lord of Norfolk; 'tis a tedious story,
 And may be spared.

We came not here, my lords,
 To talk of Mary's suff'rings, or to hear
 A rapt'rous lover déscant on her beauties.
 Cecil, what tidings do those letters bring?

CECIL.

Sussex informs us here, the northern rebels
 Are up in arms, headed by Westmoreland.

ELIZABETH.

This wounds us deep indeed. Alas! how much
 Hath England suffer'd from ingratitude;

It rives my heart to see her children thus
In impious rebel-league combined, and those
Who should support, united to destroy her.

ARUNDEL.

Fear not, my liege, the sons of loyalty
Will soon chastise their insolence ; brave Rutland,
The noble Warwick, Willoughby, and Clinton
Will stop their rapid course, and turn the storm.

CECIL.

I doubt it not ; nor had they dared so far
Without the kind support of fellow-madmen
Amongst us here. What says my lord of Norfolk ?
Are there not some who wish these rebels well ?
Some who would smile to see their country lost,
Enjoy her chains, and triumph in her ruin ?

NORFOLK.

There may be such, there may be statesmen too,
Sagacious ministers, who love to find
A plot, or make one, to alarm their sov'reign
With fancied ills, or visionary danger ;
Who raise the peaceful waves into a storm,
Only to shew how well their skilful hand
Can smooth the turbid seas, and quell their rage.

CECIL.

Neglect and cold indifference, my lord,
At times like these are little less than treason ;
And he who is not now an open friend,
And zealous too, may prove a secret foe.

NORFOLK.

A foe to whom ? my country, or my queen ?
When we shall both be call'd on for our service,
'Twill then be seen who best deserves that name.

ELIZABETH.

For shame, my lords, I charge you on your duties,
Urge it no further now ; is this a time
For private quarrels, and domestic feuds,
For party rage, and idle jealousies,
When every nerve should strain, and every arm
Be raised with vigour in our country's cause ;
When universal ruin threatens all,
And nothing but our union can preserve us ?
Begone ! I'll hear no more : break up the council.
Cecil, a word with you—we'll meet again
To-morrow. For my lord of Norfolk there,
Let him be careful on what pillow next
He lays his head ; it may concern him near.
[The Council breaks up and disperses.]

SCENE III.

ELIZABETH, CECIL.

ELIZABETH.

Cecil, I was not born to be controll'd :
Could Leicester think I ever would submit

To an imperious husband ; to partake
 A broken sceptre and divided empire ?
 That from a queen thy mistress would descend
 Into a poor dependent wife, and stoop
 To be a second in my own dominion ?
 He little knows Elizabeth !

CECIL.

Forgive

His honest zeal, he meant not to dispute
 Your royal will ; but sought the public good.

ELIZABETH.

And therefore wish'd, it seems, Eliza's race
 Might reach to future times : we thank him for
 His kindness, but I want no gaping heir
 To England's throne, to watch my slow decay,
 And count the ling'ring moments that withhold
 The glitt'ring bauble from his eager hand.
 This Norfolk too, I fear me, is—

CECIL.

A traitor,

Who hath conspired against your throne and life.
 I have such proofs of his disloyalty,
 As want but little confirmation. Hickford,
 His confidential servant, is ere now
 Secured ; and, for I know him base of soul,
 In hopes of pardon will discover all.
 Within, my liege, I will impart the whole
 Of this dark business : Alva and Ridolphi
 Are much to blame, but Norfolk's forfeit life

Must pay for both. Meantime, we'll give him fair
And open trial.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, he shall have justice ;
For he has spurn'd at mercy, and refused
The grace we offer'd : if the laws condemn,
'Tis not his riches, title, rank, or power,
No, nor his loved, his darling queen shall save him.
[*Exeunt.*]

*SCENE changes to a private apartment ; Queen Mary,
with female attendants ; she rests on a sofa, whilst her
attendants sing the following*

INVOCATION TO SLEEP.

Sleep, thou patron of mankind,
Great physician of the mind,
Who dost nor pain nor sorrow know,
Sweetest balm of every woe,
Mildest sov'reign, hear us now,
Hear thy wretched suppliants vow :
Her eyes in gentle slumbers close,
And continue her repose :
Hear thy wretched suppliants vow,
Great physician, hear us now.

MARY. (*Rising.*)

It will not be ;—e'en music's magic power,
And the sweet voice of friendship, plead in vain
For wretchedness like mine. The god of rest

And peaceful slumbers seldom deigns to visit
The daughters of affliction. O my friends,
Am I not sadly changed from what I was ?

EMILY.

Not much indeed, not much ; though grief has spread
Its sable curtain o'er thy drooping charms.
The piercing rays of native beauty still
Shine through the veil, and brighten all around them.

MARY.

O, name it not : there was a time, perhaps,
When youth's fair roses glow'd on Mary's cheek
With purple lustre ; but the scythe of time,
Sharpen'd by sorrow to a keener edge,
Hath mow'd them down with unrelenting hand.
O Emily, what bitter waters flow'd
On me from that sweet fountain : henceforth never
Let the fond mother for her daughter wish
The charms of beauty ; 'tis a fatal gift,
Parent of guilt, and pregnant with misfortune,
As I have known too well : a few short years
Did fickle fortune, like an autumn sun,
With dazzling lustre shine too bright upon me,
When the gay Francis woo'd me to his arms
With ardent zeal, and thought a noble kingdom
Too little for the purchase of my love.

EMILY.

I was a joyful witness of thy triumph,
And shared it with thee.

MARY.

O how I cherish still
The fond remembrance: when, in dearest France,
The seat of pleasure and the throne of love,
My happy hours on downy pinions fled;
When flatt'ry's dear delicious poison flow'd
From every tongue, when envious beauty frown'd,
And rival kings contended for my smiles.
But O, too soon the clouds of sorrow came,
And buried all my joys in storm and tempest.
My faithful Emily remembers well,
For she was with me in the fatal ship
That bore me weeping from the land I loved.

EMILY.

Close by thy side I wept the cruel lot
Of innocence distress'd; nor I alone,
Afflicted beauty drew the natural tear
From every eye, and the rough mariner
In sympathetic silence mourn'd your fate.

MARY.

With eyes still fix'd on the retreating shore,
Pensive I stood, and 'O, Farewell,' I cried,
'Beloved country, O, farewell for ever;'
Then sigh'd: and when the envious night appear'd,
That hid it from me on the lonesome deck,
Sleepless I waited the return of day,
That once more bless'd me with the distant view
Of her loved towers, which, slowly lessening, mock'd
My wearied eyes, and left me in despair.

O, never since that melancholy hour
 Hath thy poor mistress tasted the sweet cup
 Of joy unmixed with bitterness and woe.

EMILY.

Still let us hope a ray of light may gleam
 Through the dark scene, and brighter days succeed.
 Fair freedom, soon a welcome stranger, led
 By gallant Norfolk, comes—

MARY.

This very moment,

I know not why, but my presaging soul
 Forebodes some ill, touching my noble friend.
 O Emily, I fear his frantic zeal
 And wild enthusiasm will destroy the cause
 He means to serve : 'tis ever the hard lot
 Of princes to be ruin'd by their friends,
 And such will be my fate. O, would to Heaven
 I had not listen'd to his golden dreams
 Of visionary bliss ; nor rashly promised
 To venture with him on the stormy sea,
 Where once I wreck'd my honour and my fame :
 But sad necessity——

Ha ! who comes here ?

Enter NORFOLK.

NORFOLK.

Still, my fair mourner, brooding o'er thy griefs,
 And still lamenting ; must those beauteous eyes
 For ever be suffused with fruitless tears ?
 Look up, my love ; the night of sorrow's past,

And smiling joy beams on the cheerful morn :
I came to bring thee tidings of fair comfort,
And hoped a kinder welcome.

MARY.

O, my friend,
The flatt'rer, Hope, so often hath deceived me,
I dare not listen to his fond delusion,
Though brought by thee ; but say, my noble Norfolk,
What hast thou done ? what gracious power hath raised ?

NORFOLK.

Thou shalt again be free ; shalt rise once more
To empire and to glory : only say,
Wilt thou be mine ? Will Mary condescend,
If fortune smile propitious on our purpose,
To bless the faithful Norfolk with her charms.

MARY.

Thy ardent passion merits more, my lord,
Much more, alas ! than my unhappy fate
Hath left me to bestow : canst thou prefer,
To youthful beauty's lure, the poor remains
Of wasted life, and when the precious ore
Is all exhausted, shall I offer thee
The worthless dross and refuse of my love ?

NORFOLK.

Talk not thus meanly of the loveliest form
That ever graced a crown : for years on years
Hath fortune stood indebted to thy virtues ;

D

But she shall pay thee soon the long arrear,
And make thee full amends for all thy sorrows.

MARY.

O, that in early youth indulgent heaven
Had blest me with a sight of worth like thine :
How many days of sorrow and of guilt
Had I escaped, with all the cruel cares
Of royalty, and spent in mutual bliss
A life of peace with innocence and thee.

NORFOLK.

Come then, my lovely queen, and let me lead thee
From this detested prison to the seats
Of joy and pleasure ; in a few short hours
The sun of fair prosperity, that long
In clouds had veil'd his splendor, shall break forth,
Spread his bright beams of happiness around us,
And gild the evening of our peaceful day.
Malignant fortune ! I defy thy power ;
Thou canst not hurt us now.

MARY.

Provoke her not ;
For oft she frowns severely on the proud
Who brave her wrath : alas ! too well I know
Thy ardent courage, and intrepid soul,
Which nothing can appal ; whate'er th' attempt,
(For I am yet a stranger to thy purpose,)
I fear, 'tis full of peril.

NORFOLK.

Would it were
A thousand times more perilous ! for then
I should deserve thee more : a prize like this
Demands a sacrifice ; for such a treasure
Who would not hazard all that's dear on earth,—
Fame, honours, fortune, liberty, and life ?
[Enter an officer with guards, they seize
on Norfolk, and disarm him.]

OFFICER.

My lord of Norfolk, by the queen's command,
I do arrest thee of high treason.

NORFOLK.

Ha !
Of treason ! who shall dare accuse me of it ?
Where are the proofs of my disloyalty ?
What crimes——

MARY.

Alas ! you need not ask the cause ;
I am the treason. O there wants no more
To fix the sentence, and to seal thy fate :
'Tis guilt enough to have protected me.

NORFOLK.

I must have justice.—Lead me to the queen.

OFFICER.

You will have justice, but defence is vain :

For know, the papers, which you fondly hoped
Were buried in oblivion, are discover'd,
Nor can you hope for pardon ; in a word,
Ross has confess'd, and Hickford hath betrayed you.

NORFOLK.

Then, Cecil, thou hast caught me in the snare,
And all is lost : there is no confidence,
No trust in faithless man ; and I must fall,
The victim of my own credulity.

MARY.

'Tis as I fear'd ; my cruel destiny
Prevails o'er all, and I have dragg'd thee down
To equal ruin with me.

NORFOLK.

Sad reverse !

But just united to be parted thus :
Thus torn asunder, and the cup of bliss
Dash'd rudely from my lips ; but I was born
To taste th' extremes of happiness and woe.

MARY.

Yet mayst thou live : perchance, Elizabeth,
If we consent to part and meet no more,
May yet forgive, may spare thee yet. O, Norfolk,
Dear as I hold thy converse and thy love,
I would forego them ; shall I promise that,
And give up all ?

NORFOLK.

Not for a thousand worlds.

No, could Eliza grant me years on years,
A patriarch's length of days, I would refuse,
And spurn the proffer'd gift on such conditions.

MARY.

Norfolk, no more: thy every word but adds
Fresh grief to my afflicted heart, and shews
How much I have to feel by losing thee.

NORFOLK.

When death shall come, and he is not far off,
I'll be prepared: if yet I feel a pang,
It is for thee, that I must leave thee thus,
Without a guide, a guardian, or a friend.
'Tis not the parting with a few short years
Of fleeting life that sinks my soul to anguish;
But that the task, for which alone I wish'd
To live, is yet unfinished,—thy revenge.
Could Norfolk's death have purchased Mary's freedom,
And crown'd her days with happiness and joy,
Well pleased, I should have met the mortal blow,
Smiled on th' uplifted axe, and bless'd my fate.

MARY.

O, that in kind compassion to our woes,
Heaven had at last permitted us to fall
Together: but since I must still be left,
The mark of future vengeance; whilst it spares
This long devoted life, I will remember

Thy unexampled tenderness and truth ;
Mourn o'er thy bier, and, with thy weeping country,
Regret the loss of such exalted virtues.

NORFOLK.

To die lamented thus, and thus beloved,
Is better than to live abhorr'd and fear'd,
Like Cecil and Elizabeth. Farewell,
My lovely queen, perhaps for ever : if
We meet again, 'twill be in happiness
And triumph o'er our foes. Once more, farewell :
I'll not disgrace thee with unmanly tears
Or desperation ; I have lived with honour,
And will not die unworthy of thy love.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

LEICESTER, BURLEIGH.

LEICESTER.

Lord Burleigh! for by that fair title I
Must greet you now. Since Norfolk's death, the storms
That vex'd our turbid and unquiet state
Have ceased, and all is calm: he met his fate,
As brave men should, with manly fortitude
And resignation.

BURLEIGH.

Yet, we are not safe.
The captive Mary dictates from her cell
To subtle bigots and designing priests,
Who meditate our ruin. Much, I fear,
Deluded England will repent, too late,
Her fond indulgence to the sons of Rome,
Who still, like thankless children, have received
That kindness which they never will repay.

LEICESTER.

Then wherefore not alarm the zealous people,
Arm our brave freemen in the cause of truth,

Bid them unite to guard our holy faith,
And rise vindictive ?

BURLEIGH.

There, my friend, you err. .
Religion is a dangerous instrument,
In busy faction's hand, to stir up strife,
And urge the giddy multitude to acts
Of desperation. Let it rest in peace.

LEICESTER.

It may be prudent : but I own my fears
Of Mary's fatal influence, who, I hear,
Is not far off, and is importunate
To see the Queen, and lay her griefs before her ;
To gain her long-lost freedom ; to demand,
And have her rights proclaim'd to England's throne.

BURLEIGH.

Petitions, which the wise Elizabeth
Will never grant : nor is our royal mistress
Less anxious to behold her beauteous captive.
I know not why, but we are always pleased
To view the fountain whence our sorrows flow.
Nor will I thwart their purpose :—they shall meet.

LEICESTER.

It is a dangerous conference, my Lord,
And may be fatal to us both. Suppose
The Queen, o'ercome by tears and feign'd submission,
(For well thou know'st how smooth-tongued flattery bends
Her stubborn purpose,) should relent, should grant

The long-requested freedom, and restore
The crown she lost.

BURLEIGH.

Will that obliterate
The bitter memory of her sorrows past,—
Her years of bondage ? benefits conferr'd,
My friend, are quickly buried in oblivion,
But injuries sink deep into the heart,
And will not be forgotten.

LEICESTER.

She has been
A captive long ; and time, ere this, has spread
His healing balm o'er all her griefs.

BURLEIGH.

Not so :
For Norfolk's death hath open'd every wound,
And made them bleed afresh ; her haughty soul
Thirsts for revenge : with all her sex's softness,
Her winning graces, and attractive mien,
She wants not spirit to resent her wrongs,
Nor cunning to dissemble : little minds
By adverse fortune bend to low submission,
But great ones rise unyielding to misfortune,
Repel the insult, and avenge the blow.

LEICESTER.

You are to act, my lord, as best beseems
Your wisdom ; but to me th' experiment
Is full of peril : we may both repent it.

BURLEIGH.

O, I will trust to nature and the sex ;
For never did two female rivals meet
To part in friendship : 'tis impossible !
But see already, our impatient mistress
Is hast'ning here.

LEICESTER.

To meet her bitterest foe.

BURLEIGH.

How strong is female curiosity,
That thus can conquer pride, subdue resentment,
And soften hate to smooth complacency !
When she shall know how Spain's ambassador
Hath stained his honour, and debased the name
And office which he bears ; her pride will rise
Indignant ! and Mendoza shall repent
His shameless perfidy : but see, she comes.
[Enter Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH.

Burleigh and Leicester here, my noble friends !
Whilst I have guards like you, I shall not fall
Beneath th' assassin's hands : well, good my lords ;
Know we yet more of this conspiracy ?
Who urged them on ? what says the vile Throgmorton ?

BURLEIGH.

Long time he bore the rack in sullen silence ;
But has at length confess'd the deep design

Of Mary and her Romish friends, to seize
The crown of England : subtle Spain unites
Her power ; 'tis all the work of that arch fiend,
Mendoza.

ELIZABETH.

Let him be secured.

BURLEIGH.

My liege,
He is ; and papers have been found upon him,
Where every harbour, creek, and bay within
The realm, that favoured their descent, are traced
With subtle care : his letters to the queen,
And Mary's answers, touching every point
Of her releasement, we have now discovered,
And lodged with Walsingham. I've placed a guard
To watch his every step ; who waits without
To know your grace's pleasure.

ELIZABETH.

Leicester, haste ;
Conduct him hither straight : we shall expel
That poison soon. *[Turning to Burleigh.]*

I hate these legal spies,
Who style themselves ambassadors ; who bear
In one deceitful hand the olive branch
Of public peace, and, in the other, grasp
A dagger to destroy us. O, my friend,
A thousand darts are pointed at my heart ;
But Cecil's wisdom, like an ample shield,

Is spread between us, and averts the blow.
But see Mendoza comes.

[*Enter Mendoza, guarded.*

MENDOZA.

Unhand me, sirs :
In me revere the Majesty of Spain,
Nor dare to violate the sacred law
Of nations, which, in every clime, supports
The image of its sovereign.

ELIZABETH.

Is it thus,
You represent him ? Did the mighty Philip
Send you so far to play a ruffian's part,
To tamper with my honest subjects here,
My loyal peers, and teach them to betray me ?

MENDOZA.

We but return the injuries we received :
Did you not keep the Spanish treasure, seized
By your usurping subjects, and relieve
Your darling Anjou ?

ELIZABETH.

O, I blush for you,
And for your Prince : there was a time when Spain
Was jealous of her honour ; when, nor threats
Nor stronger bribes could urge the brave Castilian
To break his holy faith ; ere fraudulent arts
Had linked her thus with perfidy and France.

But know, mistaken man, the hour may come,
'Tis not perhaps far off, when she shall rue
Her shameless league, and cursé the guilty compact.

MENDOZA.

Ere that shall happen, Spain perchance may take
The vengeance due to her insulted king ;
May claim her right to ocean's wide domain,
So long usurped, and o'er the British sea
May ride triumphant.

ELIZABETH.

Ay ; if Drake and I
Shall give him leave : meantime remember this,
Thy crime is treason of the deepest dye,
And merits death : we will not take the forfeit,
Nor wish to stain our scaffolds with the blood
Of such ignoble slaves ; but mark me, sir,
If three days hence thou shou'dst be found
Within this realm, thy head shall answer for it.
My lord, we recommend him to your care ;
See that our orders are obeyed. Away !
Be thankful for this mercy, get thee hence ;
And let the master thou hast thus disgraced,
Find out a proper punishment : be gone.

[Exeunt Leicester and Mendoza.]

BURLEIGH.

Such ever be the fate of Briton's foes.
To trace that mystery to its poisoned spring
Cost me some days of anguish and disquiet ;
But I'm rewarded : and whilst Cecil lives,

A traitor shall not 'scape the punishment
Which he deserves.

ELIZABETH.

Such zeal for England's welfare
Deserves a nation's thanks ; and yet there are
Who blame this just severity, and call you
A proud oppressor. I am grieved in truth,
My lord, to find that you have lost of late
The public favour.

BURLEIGH.

Thanks to heaven, I steer not
By that uncertain compass, but rely
On better guides ; the wonder-loving crowd
Is ever fickle, changeful, and capricious,
Pleased without cause, and without reason angry :
One venial error, one unguarded moment,
Blots from *their* memories an age of service,
And to-day's idol is to-morrow's scorn.

ELIZABETH.

And yet, my lord, without the public voice
To aid our zeal, to give stability
And sanction to our councils, the clogged wheels
Of government move slowly on, and want
That strength and power which can alone secure
A nation's happiness.

BURLEIGH.

But ours, we know,
(What pains soe'er we take to make them happy,)

Are seldom apt to thank us for the boon.
 Meantime, my liege, the upright minister
 Will serve with zeal, his country, and his king ;
 Nor heed the murm'ring multitude ; alike
 Superior to their censure or applause,
 He keeps the even tenor of his purpose,
 And acts as honour and as conscience guide him.

ELIZABETH.

Would they were all like thee ; but say, my Cecil,
 Shall I not meet the Scottish queen ?

BURLEIGH.

My liege,
 She will be here to-night.

ELIZABETH.

I wonder much
 What spells this fair enchantress hath to boast,
 That thus can alienate my people's love.
 Would it were past ! O, how I long to see
 This peerless beauty, whose resistless charms
 Melt every eye, and conquer every heart :
 Yet Melvil said, and Melvil knew her well,
 She was not fairer than Elizabeth.

BURLEIGH.

Would she were half so virtuous, wise, and good :
 But not the noisome pestilence that breathes
 Contagious death o'er Afric's sultry plains,
 Spreads more destruction through the tainted air,

Than doth her baleful influence o'er the minds
Of thy deluded subjects.

ELIZABETH.

I have felt
Its fatal blast ; and when I think of her,
I know not why, but my affrighted soul
Shrinks back with horror.

BURLEIGH.

Summon all thy powers,
And be collected ; let not her fair form,
Her smooth delusive tongue, and artful smiles
Betray you to forgiveness.

ELIZABETH.

Look yonder, is not that
The fair deceiver ? See, she glides along
In solemn sorrow : what a noble aspect !
And yet it seems deform'd with sullen pride
And fierce resentment ; you will leave us here
Together ; when the conference is past,
Be ready, Cecil, to conduct her back
To Tewksbury.

BURLEIGH. (*Aside.*)

To chains, I hope, and death.

[*Exit Cecil.*]

Enter MARY.

MARY.

At length admitted to your royal presence,

Low at your feet behold the veriest slave
 That ever fell before them : look on me ;
 I am a queen, and yet, Elizabeth
 Would grieve to find within her spacious realm
 A subject half so wretched : O ! if e'er
 I have offended, let the ling'ring years
 Of sad captivity, the bitter sorrows
 That have oppress'd my wearied spirits, plead
 For pardon and for liberty.

ELIZABETH.

No more :

It grieves me much, fair princess, to refuse
 The boon you ask, but 'tis not mine to give ;
 You have reign'd long enough yourself already
 To know that princes are but slaves of state,
 Condemn'd by cruel policy to grieve
 For many a bleeding wound they must not heal,
 And pity sorrows which they cannot cure.
 Heaven is my witness, since the luckless hour
 That drove you from your own distracted kingdom
 To seek for refuge in my poor dominions,
 My wish has been to serve you, and to act
 As best became a sister and a queen.

MARY.

Alas ! my sufferings tell another tale.
 When on my passage to that seat of woe,
 My wretched kingdom, humbly I implored
 Safe conduct and protection : to refuse
 My poor request, and send a hostile fleet
 To intercept me ?—Was it like a queen,
 When Murray and his vile associates rose,

E

To take my factious subjects to your care,
Abet their councils, and exert your power
To foster fraud, and patronize rebellion ?

ELIZABETH.

Was there no cause for this, my fair complainer ?
Who sow'd dissension through my quiet realm ?
Who tempted Norfolk to assist my foes ?
Who gave commission to the subtle Guise,
To raise his sacred band of holy ruffians,
And lead them on beneath the mask of zeal,
To trample on the rights of half mankind,
By falsehood's lips to plead the cause of truth,
And serve a God of peace with war and slaughter ?

MARY.

The war, my liege, was never waged for me,
Nor was the slaughter mine ; I only ask'd
Your kind indulgence to the suff'ring saints
Of persecuted Rome, who fell beneath
Your grace's keen displeasure.

ELIZABETH.

I forgave,
And I relieved them : what was my reward ?
Did they not burn the rev'rend page that holds
The sacred charter of our common faith,
Dispute my rights, and boldly mutter o'er
Their midnight masses in a tongue unknown ?
Was I not scorn'd, insulted, and defied,
By your arch-priest, your proud mock-monarch there,
The papal king, who sent his deep-mouth'd bulls

To roar against me, to absolve my subjects
From their allegiance, teach disloyalty,
And make the fools believe it was—religion !

MARY.

Bitter reproach ! but manners change with times :
There was a period when Elizabeth,
Ere she was seated on the English throne,
Swam with the current, and profess'd that faith,
Those holy tenets, which she now abhors :
Might I not say, were I disposed to censure,
She was not then, or is not now, sincere.

ELIZABETH.

There was a period too, as well thou know'st,
When persecution with my bloody sister
Ruled o'er this land, when honest truth gave place
To falsehood, and sincerity was death ;
Then did I mark the colour of your faith,
It glared upon me through the horrid flame
Of dying martyrs, when religious zeal
Brandish'd the torch of discord, loosed the bands
Of nature, and disgraced humanity.

MARY.

And must I suffer still for others' crimes ?
I came for succour, but I met with chains,
And, from a sov'reign, sank into a slave.
In vain I sent, intreated, wrote in vain
To be admitted to your royal presence,
And yet you saw my base apostate brother,
Saw him, and granted to an impious rebel

What you denied his mistress and his queen.
Refused by her to whom alone I wish'd
To owe my freedom, whither, and to whom
Could a defenceless woman flee for succour ?

ELIZABETH.

But wherefore turn thee to my deadliest foe ?
What couldst thou hope for from perfidious France,
The land of falsehood and inconstancy ;
That faithless people, whom no ties can bind,
No treaties e'er confine within the pale
Of honour ; who, the more she promises,
Deceives the more, and smiles but to betray ?

MARY.

Because a nation breaks its public faith,
And bigot princes shed their subjects' blood,
I am a captive.

ELIZABETH.

There is yet a path
That leads to pardon, liberty, and peace.

MARY.

O, name the terms ; and if they do not wound
My honour and my truth, how harsh soe'er,
I'll not refuse them.

ELIZABETH.

Mark them, and comply :
Ne'er henceforth assume the arms of England,

Or claim succession to her throne, whilst yet
Eliza lives.

MARY.

Alas ! I claim no empire,
No rights but what my subjects all enjoy,
The privilege of nature, to be free.

ELIZABETH.

Yet more :—henceforth, to check the bold designs
Of foreign friends, who labour in your service
With such unwearied zeal ; you must renounce
The empty titles you so long have borne,
Your regal power, and to its lawful prince
Deliver up the crown of Scotland.

MARY.

Never !

I am not fallen so low, though you have bent
My harass'd soul beneath the galling yoke
Of proud oppression ; though you have reversed
Great nature's law, and given a mother's right
To her usurping son, I'll not resign
The throne bequeath'd me by my ancestors
But with my life ; and the last words I utter
Shall be the words of Mary, Queen of Scotland.

ELIZABETH.

Indeed ! I thought affliction was the school
Of patience and humility ; but I find
It only swells the vice it should subdue ;

Such high demeanour might have well become
The native pride of conscious innocence,
Though ill it suits with rank and circumstance
Like yours, with one who bends beneath the rod
Of justice.

MARY.

Justice ! I have sought her long,
But sought in vain ; long since she left this world,
And fled with virtue to her native skies.

ELIZABETH.

The fairest wreath that binds a crown is virtue ;
Adorn'd with that, it claims respect from all,
Howe'er ill fortune may obscure its lustre ;
But know that guilt, like death, throws down distinction :
That there are crimes which can degrade the noble,
And level princes with their meanest subjects ;
Of such you stand accused.

MARY.

Of such ! by whom ?
By those who have bereaved me of my kingdom ;
Who now would rob me of my life, and, what
Is dearer far to every virtuous mind,
My honour and my fame. Or prove me guilty,
Or hold me innocent.

ELIZABETH.

Heaven knows, I wish
To find you so ; but there are dark suspicions,
Confirm'd, I fear, too well by certain letters

That bear your royal signature, and speak
Of dreadful deeds, I shudder but to think of.

MARY.

The artifice of base designing foes,
To stain my honour, and degrade my love.
A poor attempt, in low and vulgar phrase,
To paint the genuine feelings of the heart ;
I should not thus have written, nor would you,
But that you wish'd to find the fiction true,
Have e'er believed the ill-concerted tale.

ELIZABETH.

We know a letter may be forged, but facts
Are stubborn proofs ; nor are we now to learn
What past at Kirk o'Field, nor at Dunbar,
Darnley's sad fate, or Bothwell's shameless nuptials.

MARY. (*Aside.*)

That was a cruel stroke ; but I'll return it,
Whate'er it cost me.—I had fondly hoped
My youthful follies might have claim'd at least
Your pity and forgiveness ; crimes which sprang
From that soft passion whose resistless sway
We all acknowledge,—heart-subduing love :
Nor did I think its errors would have met
Reproof so bitter from Elizabeth ;
From one who knows its influence, and, if fame
Belie her not, hath often felt its power.

ELIZABETH.

Whence learnt you that, my fair interpretress ?

In what unguarded moment, and to whom,
Have I betray'd such unbecoming weakness ?

MARY.

O, a long train of wooers to your grace ;
From haughty Philip, Spain's imperious lord,
And France's monarch, to the whining subject
Proud Arundel, and Alençon the gay,
And modest Leicester, whom your royal bounty,
After long trial of his services,
In kind compassion had bequeath'd to me.

ELIZABETH.

Audacious woman ! insolence like this
Shall never pass unpunish'd. When I wish
To have my faults and follies known, I'll send
For you, my kind instructive monitor,
Who know them all so well ; meantime, retirement
And stricter residence will suit you well,
Where you may learn to speak with more respect
Of England's sovereign, and of Henry's daughter.

MARY.

I shall obey you, madam :—but remember,
Fall'n as I am, I look with scorn on her
Whose unrelenting heart to misery thus
Can add reproach, and insult to oppression.
Farewell for ever !—since the hour is come
When you no more can feign, nor I believe ;—
Since flatt'ring hope no longer can deceive,
Expect my deep resentment, and prepare
To meet the last sad efforts of—despair.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

BURLEIGH. (*Alone.*)

Some dark intelligence, this morning sent
By Walsingham, alarms my fears : he says,
I shall know more hereafter. Ha ! who's there ?

Enter a SERVANT.

SERVANT.

A man, my lord, he seems of holy function,
With melancholy aspect, presses much
To have some conference with you.

BURLEIGH.

Let him enter.

Enter GIFFORD.

Well, whence com'st thou ?

GIFFORD.

From Rheims, my lord ; my name is
Gifford.

BURLEIGH.

Look on me : thy face and garb
Are not unknown : I have observed thee oft

Watching my steps, and lurking round the court,
As if some secret labour'd in thy breast,
And press'd for utterance.

GIFFORD.

So, perhaps, it did.

BURLEIGH.

Say what thou art.

GIFFORD.

A murtherer and a priest,
The minister of heaven and slave of hell.

BURLEIGH.

That characters like those should e'er unite
Is horrible to nature: if thou art
Indeed a priest, thou know'st thy danger here.
What ho! who waits within?

GIFFORD.

But one word more
Of threats or anger, and I close these lips
In everlasting silence.—Dost thou love
Elizabeth, thy queen?

BURLEIGH.

My royal mistress?
Dear as my life.—But what art thou to her?

GIFFORD.

I am her guardian angel; sent by heaven
To save her from destruction.

BURLEIGH.

Then, thou'rt mine ;
Go on, and tell me all :—what is thy errand ?
Who sent thee hither ?

GIFFORD.

Horror and remorse,
That would not let me rest. I came to tell thee
Thy sov'reign's life hangs on a silken thread
Which I suspend :—for know, her doom is fix'd.
A band of desperate villains, I am one,
Have bound themselves by every solemn oath
To murder her.

BURLEIGH.

Thou chill'st my blood ! and what
Could urge thee to a deed so vile ?

GIFFORD.

Religion,—
That raises virtue to its noblest height,
Or sinks the weak and vicious soul in foul
Corruption. Know'st thou not, our holy pontiffs
Deem it an act of meritorious grace
To spill the blood of heretics ; and such
Is England's queen.

BURLEIGH.

Why, what a faith is thine,
That marks its way with death, and would persuade us

It is a pious duty to destroy
Our fellow creatures.—Execrable doctrine !

GIFFORD.

But I was warn'd of heaven, and do repent
My rash resolve.

BURLEIGH.

Then thou wilt tell me who
And what they are, that urged thee to a deed
So foul as this.

GIFFORD.

This paper will unfold
The dreadful tale. There thou wilt find the names
Of all the actors in this bloody scene :
Determin'd spirits, resolute and bold,
Men that were fit to set the world on fire,
And leap into the flame. Read that, and tremble.

BURLEIGH.

Give me the horrid scroll : *(reads).*

Ha ! Tilney here,
And Babington ! of Dethrick is he not ?

GIFFORD.

The same, my lord.

BURLEIGH.

I know him : that a youth
Of ample fortune and fair character

Should league with ruffians in a cause so vile
Is strange indeed : but bigotry will stoop
To all that's mean, and all that's infamous.
Did Mary give consent to this dark business ?

GIFFORD.

Letters have past 'twixt her and Babington.

BURLEIGH.

Touching the murther of Elizabeth ?

GIFFORD.

'Tis so reported.

BURLEIGH.

Make me sure of that ;
Swear it, good priest.

GIFFORD.

If it be true, I will ;
If not, a kingdom should not bribe me to it.

BURLEIGH.

Thou art a noble traitor.

GIFFORD.

I have been
A villain, but am honest : was once
Thy foe, but thou shalt find me now thy friend.
Give me the means, and not a slave amongst them
Shall live to say, " That's Gifford who betray'd us."

BURLEIGH.

How shall I thank thee? say, what wilt thou have
Which Burleigh's ample power can give thee?

GIFFORD.

Nothing;

I ask no meed: confession of our crimes,
Like every virtue, is its own reward.
Think'st thou, the man who sacrificed his friends
To serve thee can be purchas'd? No, my lord;
I have a nobler aim: ambition acts
As strongly in a cloister as a court.
The priest of Rheims would wish to be remembered
In future times, and rival thee hereafter.
It may be said, perchance, that Cecil lov'd,
But Gifford *saved*, Elizabeth.—Farewell.

[*Exit Gifford.*]BURLEIGH. (*Alone.*)

How much to thee, all gracious Providence,
Doth England stand indebted: thy kind hand
Averts each threatening ill, and from her fall
She rises still unconquered by misfortune.
This fellow is sincere, and has a spirit
That soars above his humble sphere; he may
Be useful to us. Ha! my Walsingham.

Enter WALSINGHAM.

WALSINGHAM.

I give you joy, my friend, the work is done.

BURLEIGH.

Thou comest in happy hour, to save thy queen,
Thy country, and thyself ; for know, a band
Of vile conspirators—

WALSINGHAM.

I know it all.

Thou'st seen the priest of Rheims ;—I sent him to thee,
And flew on wings of loyalty and love,
To warn our sovereign of her danger.

BURLEIGH.

How

Bore she the news ?

WALSINGHAM.

With more than Roman firmness
And manly courage : “ Thanks to Heaven,” she said,
“ Then England will be safe.” And when I urged her
To guard her person well, she smiled and cried,
“ My people will defend me.”

BURLEIGH.

There she shines

Unrivall'd. Passion oft-times will betray her
To female weakness ; but, when public danger
And great events call forth her faculties,
She rises into dignity and grace.

WALSINGHAM.

When I informed her Mary had conspired

Against her life, her eyes indignant flash'd,
As if transported with unusual gladness.

BURLEIGH.

I doubt it not ; and we too may rejoice.
Could we but fix the letters there, my friend,
It would confirm her guilt.

WALSINGHAM.

Know then, 'tis done :

Navus and Curl, her faithful ministers,
Whom I have taken special care to list
Into our service, have acknowledged it ;
And, if her secretaries say 'tis so,
We'll not dispute their kind authority.

BURLEIGH.

Then we may rest secure. The net of death
Is wreath'd around her, and she can't escape.
Knows she that Gifford hath betray'd her ?

WALSINGHAM.

No ;

For she is closely watch'd. She little thinks
What fatal change a few short hours have wrought ;
But soon we shall inform her ; for this morn,
Sir Walter Mildmay, Barker, and myself,
With Paulet, were commission'd by the queen
Instant to see the fair conspirator,
And bid her make, with all convenient speed,
The best defence her cunning can supply.

I hope, my lord, you will attend to grace
Our embassy.

BURLEIGH.

If Cecil can do ought
To serve his country and his queen, depend
On his assistance.

WALSINGHAM.

Whilst Elizabeth
Is warm in her resentment, let us keep
The glorious flame alive, 'till it consume
The guilty victim.

BURLEIGH.

Come, my friend, lead on ;
'Tis the last blow, and we must strike it home.
[Exit.

SCENE II.

MARY, EMILY.

MARY.

No news from France, from Paget or Mendoza :
Suspense is sure the worst of human ills ;
Would I could know my fate ! good Emily :
What's this ? a picture.

[Takes up a small picture
from the table.

F

EMILY.

'Tis a gift from Rome ;
 I found it in the garden, thus to you
 Directed. *[Reads the direction.]*

MARY.

'To the persecuted queen,'
 Oppress'd, it might have said, beyond compare ;
 But see ! the cunning artist has pourtray'd
 An emblem of approaching liberty.
 'Tis the God Mercury striking off the head
 Of subtle Argus, when he kept in bonds
 The beauteous Iö. Take it, Emily,
 I like it not : the jealous queen may wrest
 This innocent device to my destruction ;
 I must not listen to such flattering dreams
 Of visionary bliss. Alas, my friend,
 For miseries like mine there is no cure
 But death ; and see ! his harbingers appear ;
 For these, I know, are from Elizabeth.

Enter the Commissioners, HATTON, LORD
 CHANCELLOR, BURLEIGH, &c.

Who's there ? my lords, this is a rough intrusion ;
 But, 'tis no matter : proud authority
 Is ever wont to trample on distress,
 And treat misfortune with indignity.

HATTON.

Forgive us, madam, the unwelcome visit,
 If, in obedience to the queen's command,
 We come the mournful messengers of woe.

MARY.

Sorrow and I, my lords, have been so long
Acquainted with each other, that what form
Soe'er she takes, I am prepared to meet
The worst that can befall : thank heaven, my spirit,
As if it rose with my misfortunes, soars
Above itself, and seems to brave my fate.
What are these melancholy tidings ? Speak,
And I attend ; command, and I obey.

HATTON.

You stand accused of foul conspiracy
Against our sovereign liege, her throne and life.

MARY.

Treason and murder ! am I fallen so low
As to be rank'd amongst the savage herd
Of vile assassins ? Look, my lords, on me,
And ask yourselves, if subtle policy
Would not have found a fitter instrument
To work its bloody purpose, to dethrone
A princess, and destroy a powerful empire,
Than the poor inmate of this lonely cell ?

HATTON.

But those who cannot execute may yet
Command, direct, and govern : ministers
Of vengeance may be hired in every rank
And every nation ; some have been employ'd
To serve *your* cause ; by *you* have been rewarded,
As Morgan and his base adherents know,
By every hour's experience of your bounty.

MARY.

He lost his all for me, and 'twas my duty :
Did not your idol mistress do the same ?
Who pension'd Grey, and my apostate son,
The King of Scotland ? why am I alone
Forbid to think on those who loved and served me ?

BURLEIGH.

The villain, Parry, was dispatch'd by him
To assassinate the queen.

MARY.

It may be so ;
I sent him not : but every needy slave,
Whom bigot zeal, or shatter'd fortunes prompt
To deeds of desperation, steals my name
To gild his treason, sanctify oppression,
And plead for murder. Thus am I condemn'd,
By an unfeeling, cruel world, for crimes
Which I abhor, and guilt I never knew.

BURLEIGH.

It will be urged against you ; and 'tis fit,
Strait you appear and answer to the charge,
That to proud Philip, Spain's ambitious king,
In solemn form, you have deliver'd up
Your claim and title to the throne of England.

MARY.

When I am minded to dispose of that
Which is my own, I shall not ask the leave

Of England's queen : but what have I to give ?
 You talk, my lords, as if a wretch like me,
 Bereaved of every aid, had crowns to scatter
 Amongst her friends, and kingdoms to bestow.

BURLEIGH.

You might have had a noble one to give,
 If heaven, in pity, had not interposed
 To save the best of princes from destruction,
 From *you*, and instant death.

MARY.

Amazement ! I
 Destroy your queen ? I own, if France had sent
 Its promised succours, and deceitful Spain
 Join'd its free aid, I would have fought my way
 To freedom : but I would not stain my soul
 With horrid murder, for a thousand kingdoms.
 Who dares accuse me of a crime so base ?

BURLEIGH.

Know you not Babington ?

MARY.

I know him not,
 Nor ever heard his name.

BURLEIGH.

Nor Ballard ?

MARY.

No.

BURLEIGH.

'Tis pity then you ventured to entrust
Such dangerous secrets in a stranger's breast ;
For know, they are reveal'd.

MARY.

What sland'rous tongue
Hath, with its deadly venom, poison'd thus
The royal ear ? Where are your witnesses,
My base accusers ? bring them face to face ;
Let me confront them here.

WALSINGHAM.

Alas, they are dead,
And their last breath confirm'd the charge against you.

MARY.

Confirm'd the charge ! O, shameless artifice ;
To catch with eager haste the welcome falsehood,
Then close the traitor's lips, lest he should live
To wish he had been honest and disclaim it.
But ye are prodigal of royal blood,
And thirst, I know, for mine : nor is it strange,
A foreign prince should meet with chains and death
From those whose malice hath not spared their own.

WALSINGHAM.

We want not living witnesses to prove
The melancholy truth. Your letters sent
To Paget and Mendoza ; others, fraught
With full instructions to your Romish friends,

By your own faithful minions, Nau and Curl,
Have been produced.

MARY.

Ungrateful, perjured slaves ;
Did they not swear obedience to their queen,
And silence too ? and shall a hireling slave,
Awed by the fear of death, or bribed to sell
His wretched mistress, thus be credited
Before a princess ?

BURLEIGH.

This is not the time
For your defence, but may be urged hereafter :
It is her highness' pleasure, you prepare
For instant trial.

MARY.

Trial ? and by whom ?
I am a sov'reign still : where are my peers ?
Or who shall sit in judgment on a queen ?

BURLEIGH.

That title, madam, will avail you nought.
We know, that princes in a land of slaves
May plead a tyrant's privilege, and defy
The sword of justice ; but on freedom's throne
She sits supreme. Within this realm, thank heaven,
The proudest peer, who injures or oppresses
The meanest subject, will not pass unpunish'd.

MARY.

Am I a subject ? to acknowledge it
 Were to debase the Majesty of Kings,
 And stain the blood that flows within my veins.
 The crown I wear was given me from above :
 I have received it from the hand of heaven,
 Nor can an earthly power deprive me of it.

BURLEIGH.

Yet here you must submit : in every state,
 The laws that grant protection claim obedience.

MARY.

Protection ? gracious heaven ! to be deny'd
 The common rights which nature gives to all :
 To be oppress'd, insulted, and betray'd ;
 Stripp'd of the small remains of royalty
 Which I possess'd : committed to the care
 Of ruffian slaves, regardless of my sex,
 My birth, and honour ; call you this protection ?
 You talk of laws ; but know, there is a law,
 In every age and every clime revered ;
 Which Greece and Rome in ancient times adored,
 Barbarians teach, and savages obey,
 Which you have broken and contemn'd,—the law
 Of hospitality.

BURLEIGH.

More sacred still,
 Is that superior duty which we owe
 Our country and our king. Of human laws
 The first and greatest is the people's safety.

MARY.

Which you, its watchful guardian, must protect
From every ill. But say, my gentle lords,
Who are these chosen ministers of fate
Appointed to perform the royal will ?
O, ye are all an honourable band :
Amongst the rest, I am to number you,
And you, my lord, no doubt ; is it not so ?
My pre-determined, my acknowledged foes,
Cecil and Walsingham ! illustrious names !
How will they shine in future story, when,
To latest times, your annals shall record
This noble deed, shall celebrate your triumph,
Your glorious conquest, o'er a helpless woman !

BURLEIGH.

Unkind suggestion ! Cecil's honour scorns
To act from passion, pride, or mean resentment.
The friend of England and Elizabeth,
His wishes centre in the public good.

MARY.

And I must fall ; 'tis fix'd, my doom is past ;
I am th' appointed victim to be slain.
Bind me with cords, and lead me to the altar ;
But know, I'll not be made a spectacle
For fools to gaze at : misery hath not sunk,
Or so subdued, my yet unconquer'd spirit,
That I should stoop to such indignity,
Or deign to plead before your mock tribunal.

BURLEIGH. (*Aside.*)

Misfortune will not bend her; let us try
What pride can do. [*Aloud to Mary.*

Permit me, ere you fix
Your rash resolve, to give my poor advice.
One powerful reason which a mind like yours,
Touch'd by the sense of honour, must approve.
You stand accused, but not condemn'd: the queen,
Who rather would forgive than punish, hopes,
Nay fondly wishes, if I know her well,
To find you blameless. Virtue's sterling gold
Will from the fiery trial rise refined,
And shine with added lustre; but, if now
You shun the contest, will not malice say,
Not conscious innocence, but fearful guilt,
Had urged you to decline a hopeless cause
You had not strength or courage to defend?

MARY.

That presses here;—it shakes my firmest purpose;
What's to be done? My lords, I shall attend you;
Though little will avail, against you all,
The sighs and tears of an abandon'd captive,
Without a guide, a counsellor, or friend
To plead my cause, or witness to my truth.
But I will rest on innocence alone;
My counsel—conscience, and my witness—heaven.

BURLEIGH.

And to that heaven which knows our every thought
Here we appeal: no fraud or artifice,
No private passions, shall divert the stream
Of equal justice; no impatient zeal
Or partial bias sway the law's decree.

MARY.

I trust it *will* not : but remember, sirs,
 Mine is a cause that must be heard hereafter,
 In distant realms, and on a wider stage :
 The world is larger than this little kingdom ;
 They may acquit the guilty, may reverse
 Your judgment ; and the sentence that condemns
My character, may sacrifice your *own*.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

BURLEIGH, DAVISON.

BURLEIGH.

Justice at length hath done her pious office,
 And Mary is condemn'd.

DAVISON.

In truth, my lord,
 Before the great tribunal as she stood,
 And cast her lovely eyes around the throng,

With reverential awe I gazed upon her ;
 Her modest look and fair demeanour charm'd
 The list'ning crowd : with such becoming firmness,
 Such sweet deportment, dignity, and grace,
 Such energy of grief she urged her cause ;
 I blush to own it, but I pitied her,
 And almost wish'd I could have been her friend.

BURLEIGH.

She found too many there, and whilst she lives
 We are not safe. Elizabeth alone
 Can execute the sentence : but her will
 Is most capricious ; as old age creeps on,
 Desponding fears and causeless jealousy
 Oppress her mind, as heavy vapours rise
 To cloud the evening of the brightest day.

DAVISON.

She is much changed of late ; and, much disturb'd,
 The fierce contending passions seem to shake
 Her brittle frame, and rack her inmost soul :
 Last night I watch'd her, when, in pensive mood,
 Disconsolate and wild, she wander'd o'er
 The lonely palace, stopp'd, and turn'd again,
 Then cried, " No ! Davison, it must not be !
 She shall not die ?"

BURLEIGH.

Dissimulation all !

She hates, abhors, detests the Scottish queen.
 But she's a woman, and must be persuaded
 To what she wishes most. Yonder she comes :

Now mark how I will bend her to my purpose,
Awake her fears, alarm her jealousy,
And fire her proud resentment :—but she's here.

Enter ELIZABETH, LEICESTER, &c.

ELIZABETH. (*Reading a paper.*)

'Strike, or be stricken;' so the motto says:
'Tis a kind caution, and deserves our notice.

[*Turns to Leicester.*

How hard, my Leicester, is the sov'reign's lot!
If we condemn, however just the sentence,
The world will call us cruel and severe;
And, if we pardon, blame our ill-placed mercy,
Or say it's so, because we dare not punish.

LEICESTER.

Forgive our zeal; what has been urged we hope
Will not offend your grace: you are not safe
Whilst Mary yet survives.

HATTON.

We only ask

For justice.

LEICESTER.

Justice on a traitor.

ELIZABETH.

What say my faithful Commons? Davison,
Can they devise no means to save her?

DAVISON.

None.

They humbly do intreat your grace, to give
Immediate orders for her execution.

ELIZABETH.

I thank you for your counsel, thank you all,
Because I know it springs from honest love,
And kind attention to me; but 'tis hard,
'Tis wondrous hard, that you will force me thus
To bathe my hands in blood.

BURLEIGH.

Will't please your highness
To see th' ambassadors who wait without,
And crave admittance?

ELIZABETH.

No; I'll none of them :
What is the purport of their embassy?

BURLEIGH.

Bellievre comes, my liege, to say, if, moved
By kind compassion for the royal captive,
You grant her pardon, every aid that France,
With all her power and friendship, can bestow,
You may command; henceforth she binds herself
In solemn league of amity and love.

ELIZABETH.

Our cousin, France, no doubt must mean us well,
In wishing thus we sagely would resign
Our throne and life, to save a worthless woman :
Tell him, we thank him for the kind advice,
But cannot buy his friendship quite so dear :
What more ?

BURLEIGH.

With grief he adds, if you condemn her
To ignominious death, he stands resolved
To join the friends of injured majesty ;
Nor will he sheathe the sword, till he hath found
Atonement due, and ample retribution.

ELIZABETH.

'Tis nobly vaunted ; but the hand of heaven
May guard us still : meantime, let him inform
The blust'ring Henry, that his promised aid
We need not, and his threat'nings we despise.
And, what says Scotland ?

BURLEIGH.

Filial piety
Pleads hard for Mary's life : but if you spurn
The suppliant's prayer, you must expect ere long
To meet an injured sov'reign, at the head
Of his indignant people, to avenge
The insult, and repay it, blood for blood.

ELIZABETH.

Mistaken, foolish boy! but let him bear
This answer back: It much may profit him
To hide his griefs, and stifle his resentment.
The time may come when others will be glad
Of what we have to give; if he condemn it,
Let him be told, we leave him the free choice
Of a rich kingdom, or—a poor revenge.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

My liege, the French are landed on our coast,
Led by the powerful Guise; the Sussex shore
Is cover'd with their troops.

ELIZABETH.

Why, let them come;
We are prepared to meet them.

OFFICER.

They advance
With twenty times our force.

ELIZABETH.

No matter, sir;
When Britons, urged by wrongs like these, unite
To scourge oppression, 'tis disloyalty

To doubt success, and treason to despair.
Begone, and leave us.

BURLEIGH.

Whilst the Scottish queen
Still lives to brave us, every power will join
To aid her cause : this very morn, my lords,
I was inform'd, a Spanish fleet was seen
Near Milford Haven ; already their proud sails
Are flutt'ring in the harbour.

ELIZABETH.

Mary's claim
To England's throne, has been long since transferr'd
To Spain's imperial lord, and they are come
In Philip's name to take possession of
The visionary kingdom she bequeath'd ;
And it shall not be long before we give them
A legal claim to their inheritance.

WALSINGHAM.

My letters say that Scotland's king, enraged
At Mary's sentence and approaching fate,
Is marching southward, and his lawless bands
E'en now are ravaging our borders.

ELIZABETH.

Ha !
And must we then be threaten'd into pardon ?
When they have got a lion in the toils,
How every little beast will spurn at him,

To show his valour.—To be braved, insulted,
 And menaced thus!—She shall not live a day;
 No, not an hour!—Come hither, Davison;
 There is a fatal paper which I gave you;
 A warrant I commanded you to draw
 For Mary's execution.

DAVISON.

Here, my liege,
 It only wants your royal signature.

ELIZABETH.

I'll give it you.—Yet stop a moment! Ha!
 What think you, sir; a woman, and a queen!
 It must not be! She could not want my crown,
 For that she knows would only make her wretched;
 And for my life,—she dare not!—Take it back:
 Some other time we'll think on't.

BURLEIGH.

Come, my lord,
 Let us be gone: the queen rejects our suit.
 But hear me, madam; since 'tis your resolve,
 To tempt the providence that hath preserved you,
 Take back your honours, I resign them all,
 All trust and office here: I will not stay
 To see my sov'reign fall, and be a tame
 And silent witness of my country's ruin.

ELIZABETH. (*To Davison.*)

Give me the paper;—cruel, bloody Cecil

Says I must do it, therefore be it so:
 My people say I must. Look, Davison,
 How my hand trembles whilst I write.—'Tis done;
 Away with it! begone this instant,
 Ere I repent, and wish the deed undone.
 This will content you all: you see I hold
 Your peace and welfare dearer than my own.
[*Exeunt Lords.*]

ELIZABETH, BURLEIGH.

ELIZABETH.

Cecil, come hither. Now we are alone,
 I'll tell thee all I feel and all I fear.

BURLEIGH.

Thou hast no cause to fear: from this blest hour,
 I trust nor foreign nor domestic foes
 Shall e'er disturb the peace of England's queen.

ELIZABETH.

It is disturb'd; 'tis lost, 'tis gone. I see
 The hand of Heaven in wrath upraised against me,
 And I shall never taste of comfort more.

BURLEIGH.

Why, what hath happened?

ELIZABETH.

O! last night, my Cecil,
 I had a horrid dream that shook my soul.

Methought the furious Mary stood before me,
 In bloody robes array'd, and pale with wrath.
 Sudden she snatch'd the sceptre from my hand,
 And gave it to a low'ring, peevish boy.
 Behold ! she cried, how Darnley's hapless race
 Rise to revenge the murder of his queen.
 This future curse of thy devoted land,
 Ordain'd by fate to scourge a guilty people,
 Shall rule thy kingdom with an iron rod :
 Ne'er shall thy wretched subjects find repose,
 Or England flourish whilst a Stuart reigns.

BURLEIGH.

And shall the great Elizabeth be scared
 By idle dreams, the mere delusive sport
 Of wanton fancy in the troubled mind ?
 But grant they were the harbingers of truth,
 Which Heaven avert ! if after long possession
 Of every joy that freedom could bestow
 Beneath thy fost'ring care, the maddening crowd
 Again should stoop to slavery and Rome,
 Would that obscure the lustre of thy virtues ?
 Thy memory then would be but more revered
 By after ages.

ELIZABETH.

I would have my name,
 Like my own Thames, or Medway's lucid wave,
 To flow for ever down the stream of time
 Clear and untainted. Will not this pollute
 The limpid current ? how shall I appear
 Hereafter ? will not history's sacred page

Record me as a proud, oppressive tyrant ?
Will it not call me cruel and unjust ?
Will it not say I kill'd a lovely queen ?
That I was jealous of superior charms,
And envied triumphs which I could not gain ?

BURLEIGH.

'Twill say you follow'd nature's first great law,
Self-preservation, which appeals to all,
And is by all obey'd : 'twill say you saved
From death the best of sovereigns, and restored
To safety and to peace, the land you loved.

ELIZABETH.

Thy partial kindness mitigates my woes,
And softens every ill ; yet, would to heaven
Thou hadst not made me sign that dreadful paper :
I feel myself to blame ; I've gone too far ;
O ! call back Davison, restore my peace,
My honour, my renown : this single deed
Will cancel all my honest labours past,
With bitterest anguish will my soul devour,
And make me wretched to my latest hour ;
Expose to scorn my once respected name,
And brand to ages yet unborn, Eliza's fame.

SCENE *changes to an apartment in the prison.*

DOUGLAS AND EMILY.

DOUGLAS.

Must she then die ?

EMILY.

She must ; 'tis so determined.

DOUGLAS.

Who brought the fatal news ?

EMILY.

The Earls of Kent
And Shrewsbury.

DOUGLAS.

So short a warning ! how
Did she receive it ?

EMILY.

With a face of joy,
And all the calm composure of a soul,
That, fearless of futurity, looks forward
To promised bliss. O ! if a tranquil mind
Is ever, as philosophers have taught us,
The fair companion of sweet innocence,
She must be guiltless, and she must be happy.
But see,—prepared to meet her fate, she comes
In all the solemn dignity of woe :
She seems in meditation deep ;—let us retire.

MARY. (*Alone.*)

At length the busy scene of life is o'er,
And the kind hand of interposing heaven
Will put a gracious period to my woes,

And take its vengeance here. Elizabeth
Is but the poor deputed instrument
Of wrath supreme, offended at my crimes.
'Tis Bothwell ; conscience, why wilt thou recall
The dire remembrance ; Bothwell strikes the blow :
Yet mercy may be found ; and if a life
Of pain and anguish, hard captivity,
And sorrow, can atone for errors past,
I yet may hope forgiveness from above.

Enter DOUGLAS, EMILY, &c.

MARY.

My Douglas, welcome ; welcome my kind friends :
You wonder much to see me thus attired
In proud array : it is the nuptial robe,
Which in my days of happiness I wore,
When France's queen, ere I had known or guilt
Or sorrow, and in this I wish to die.

EMILY.

Permit us, madam, humbly to perform
Our last sad duty.

[They kneel around her.]

MARY.

Do not mock me now
With idle pomp. The hour approaches near,
When worldly pride, distinction, rank, and power,
Shall soon be buried with me in the grave,
Where we are equal all ;—give me some wine :

Health to my friends ! may every earthly blessing,
With length of days, and happier far than mine,
Attend you all ! nay, do not weep, rejoice
And triumph with me : toss'd as I have been,
In a tumultuous sea, midst storm and tempest,
Should I not smile, at last to see before me
The peaceful haven of eternal rest ?
Farewell, my Douglas ; thy benignant hand
Was once stretch'd forth to give me liberty,
And thou e'er since hast been my kind companion,
I never could repay thee ; but my death
Will give thee freedom and return the boon.
The little all my foes had left, to you
I have bequeath'd, with these poor trifles ; take
And wear them for my sake ; now fare ye well :
Let us embrace, and if in aught we've fail'd
In duty to each other, let this seal
Our mutual pardon. [Kisses them.]

Enter THE EARL OF KENT.

Ha ! the Earl of Kent.

KENT.

Forgive me, madam, but the time—

MARY.

I know

Your business, sir, and am prepared : that soul
Deserves not immortality, which shrinks
Beneath the stroke of death. But say, my lord,
Will the queen let my faithful servants here

Attend me to the scaffold ? 'twill afford
Some little comfort to their drooping hearts
To close these eyes, and take a last adieu.

KENT.

'Tis granted ; but remember what I told you.

MARY.

They will not, shall not, do it. One thing more :
May I not hope, my lord, you will permit
A holy priest to minister sweet comfort
To my departing soul.

KENT.

It must not be.
It is her grace's will, that none attend
But he whose office——

MARY.

Whom I must not hear.
It is then as I fear'd : Elizabeth
Deprived me long of every joy on earth,
And now, unkindly, bars my path to heaven ;
But I submit.

KENT.

Religion was the cause
Of all your griefs and ours ; as your life hath been
A terror to our faith.

H

MARY.

All gracious heaven !

Have I then lived to hear my foes confess,
That perseverance in thy righteous cause,
Is Mary's worst of crimes ? it is enough :
Of earthly crowns I take my glad farewell ;
A nobler kingdom, and a brighter crown,
Await on Scotland's queen ; for I shall die
A blessed martyr to the faith I love.
Lead on, good Kent, I'll follow thee through death,
To endless life, to glory, and reward.

Enter MELVIL.

Ha ! Melvil here.

MELVIL.

Alas ! that I should live
To be a witness to this mournful scene !

MARY.

O ! Melvil, thou must carry back to Scotland
The tidings of thy queen's disastrous fate.
Bear with thee, too, my blessings on my child :
He has forgot the duty of a son,
But I'm a mother still, and must forgive him.
Tell him, 'midst all my sufferings, all my wrongs,
I have done nought injurious to his kingdom,
His honour, or his rights ; but, if he hopes
To keep with joy the fair inheritance
I have bequeath'd him, good Melvil, tell him,
It is the dying mother's last request,

He will support that holy faith, which thus
Hath in my latest hour supported me.
Melvil, farewell for ever ; in thy prayers
Remember Mary. Bear me witness all,
That I forgive Elizabeth, as here
I hope for pardon from offended heaven.
Great God of truth, thou searcher of the heart,
O ! now look down upon, and hallow mine
With thy acquitting grace : extend thy love,
And smooth my passage to the realms above !

THE END.



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